

connection

Magazine

SPRING/SUMMER 2017

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Dr. Jewel Hairston Bronaugh**

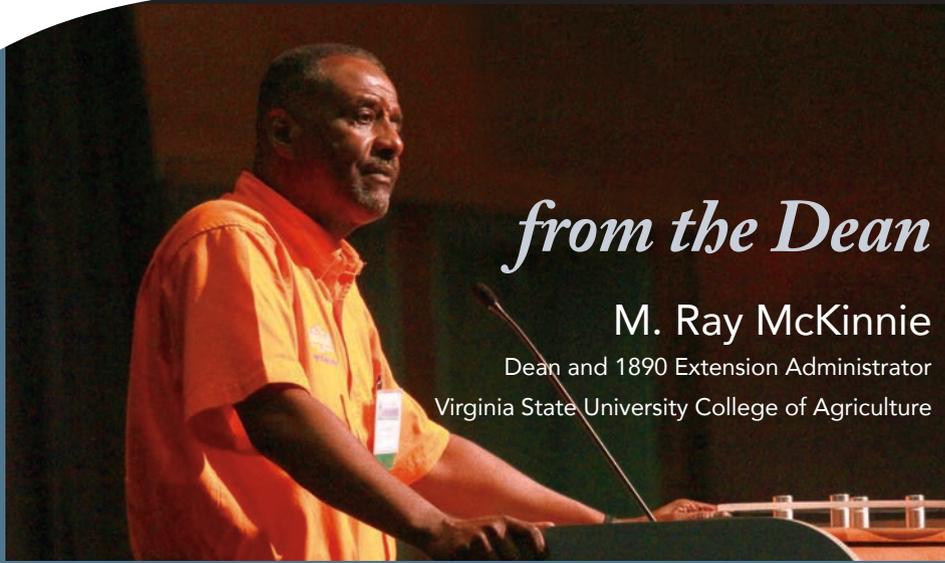
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from the Dean

M. Ray McKinnie

Dean and 1890 Extension Administrator
Virginia State University College of Agriculture

Ask many Americans, especially children, where their food comes from, and the answer is the grocery store. What they don't realize is that the Food Lions, Krogers, Walmarts and other grocery store chains are simply distributors. Food doesn't originate there; it's only packaged and sold there! Within only a few generations removed from the land, most of us have become so disconnected from playing an active role in putting food on our tables that we've forgotten how the system works.

"Agriculture" is a simple word for a dynamic concept...growing food. You see, it appears we human beings developed a bad habit—the need to eat, which makes agriculture a pretty big deal. In fact, agriculture and forestry were our nation's first industries and are still the cornerstone of our country's economy, providing millions of jobs. As the nation's top export, agriculture plays a vital role in sustaining not only healthy bodies but also a healthy economy and the country's food security, as well.

A nation cannot exist without an adequate supply of safe, affordable food. Fortunately, the U.S. food supply is one of the strongest in the world, but it takes a lot of skilled workers in a wide variety of job sectors to make that so.

As a land-grant institution, Virginia State University plays an important role in preparing young minds for challenging career opportunities. Each semester our students study agritourism, human health and nutrition, agribusiness and economics, animal science and more. They are the nation's emerging workforce whose jobs will be to cultivate, harvest, process, test, package, transport and sell the staples we toss in our shopping cart each week at our favorite grocery stores.

Also as a part of its land-grant mission and rich heritage, VSU manages an Agricultural Research Station as well as Virginia Cooperative Extension—a role we share with Virginia Tech. As you'll see in this issue of *Connection*, both Extension and research play vital roles in the growth of our food system, not just in Virginia, but across the globe.

Frankly speaking, although we shouldn't, it's easy to take American agriculture for granted. As you read our stories, I hope you'll gain a better insight into the complex world of our food system and the important role VSU, and perhaps you, play in ensuring it stays safe and efficient.

Sincerely,

M. Ray McKinnie, Ph.D.
Dean and 1890 Extension Administrator, VSU College of Agriculture

Founded in 1882, Virginia State University is one of Virginia's two land-grant institutions and is located 20 minutes south of Richmond in the village of Ettrick.

Virginia State University is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award baccalaureate, master's and doctoral degrees and a certificate of advanced graduate study. For information regarding the status of the University's accreditation, contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, tel (404) 679-4501, www.sacscoc.org.

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Jewel Hairston Bronaugh Heads New Center

Dr. Jewel Hairston Bronaugh (pronounced bruh naw) is back at Virginia State University in a newly-formed, pivotal position as executive director of the Center for Agriculture, Research, Engagement, and Outreach (CAREO)

In announcing her appointment, Dr. G. Dale Wesson, VSU vice president for Research & Economic Development, emphasized that a significant aspect of her task is to bring the university's land-grant mission to the forefront, especially as it pertains to addressing critical health disparities and educational issues in challenged communities.

Bronaugh also is charged with engaging the campus community in collaborative Extension and research partnerships and targeting localities

surrounding VSU to address issues plaguing limited-resource communities.

"Through urban agriculture research and education, it's vital we address food security and food access," Bronaugh said. "We'll continue to teach people how to grow food in urban communities, teach youth and adults about ag-based business entrepreneurship, and teach families how to prepare healthier foods."

In leading this charge Bronaugh comes equipped with pertinent management skills developed through professional experience. In prior capacities she has served as a VSU 4-H Extension Specialist, Virginia Tech Southeast District program leader, VSU associate administrator for Extension, dean of VSU's College of Agriculture, and most



recently Virginia's executive director for the USDA Farm Service Agency.

She says her first official act in her new position will be to release internally-funded CAREO seed grants to engage the VSU campus community in university-wide research projects. Through CAREO, anyone on campus is eligible to seek grant funding that coincides with pre-determined program priorities. For 2017-2018, this focus is on food security and hunger; human health and nutrition; STEM and entrepreneurial education; and agriculture-based business development.

For more information, contact Dr. Bronaugh at (804) 524-2740 or email jbronaugh@vsu.edu.



McKinnie Named College of Agriculture Dean and 1890 Extension Administrator

Dr. M. Ray McKinnie, who served as the interim dean and 1890 Extension Administrator of the College of Agriculture, has been formally appointed to the position.

McKinnie, who arrived at VSU in July 2015 to serve as assistant administrator of Extension programs in the College of Agriculture, stepped into the interim dean position two months later after Dean Jewel Hairston was

appointed Director of USDA Virginia Farm Services Agency.

"Dr. McKinnie's outstanding leadership while serving as interim dean has already benefited Virginia State University as a whole and its College of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension and Agricultural Research Station in particular," said Dr. Donald Palm, VSU's provost and vice president for academic affairs. "He has left no doubt in my mind that he will continue to direct the college to even greater accomplishments and help VSU embrace its role as a top land-grant university."

As dean, McKinnie provides administrative oversight for the college's academic departments, and its agricultural research and Cooperative Extension programs. In accepting the position, McKinnie said he was thankful to have the opportunity to serve the university and the commonwealth.

"Agriculture is a critical component of the global economy and is Virginia's number one industry," he said. "VSU has a long tradition of training students to be valuable contributors to that industry, as well as talent for developing solutions for better food security, safety and sustainability with its cutting-edge research."



ON THE COVER: VSU's College of Agriculture, Research and Cooperative Extension programs make impacts at home and around the world. Look for this image by stories that showcase some of our global initiatives.

U.S. Agricultural Leaders Gather at Conference



Last September, nearly 700 U.S. agricultural leaders gathered at the Virginia Beach Convention Center for the 7th National Small Farm Conference.

Dr. M. Ray McKinnie, Dean of Virginia State University's College of Agriculture, welcomed guests at breakfast by remarking, "Significant effort was made by farmers, Extension agents, USDA representatives and others to bring you the Smithfield bacon, Virginia ham, Surry sausage, eggs and potatoes on your plates this morning. We're here this week to address how to keep that train on track."

The conference is the seventh in a series held every three to four years across the U.S. for stakeholders from academia, non-governmental and governmental organizations, foundations and grassroots farming communities. It ensures the success of farmers and ranchers because of the vital role they play in the national economy

and in environmental sustainability, biodiversity, and landscape and cultural heritage. Started in 1996, it is the nation's largest event to address the needs, challenges and successes of small farmers. Held in Virginia for the very first time, this year's conference was hosted by Virginia State University's College of Agriculture, Virginia Cooperative Extension and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, with support from Virginia Tech.

Creating and Sustaining Small Farmers and Ranchers

This year's conference, "Creating and Sustaining Small Farmers and Ranchers," put specific emphasis on women and youth in agriculture, farmworkers, immigrants, socially-disadvantaged producers and returning military veterans. According to Thursday's keynote speaker, Kirk Hanlin, assistant chief of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, "One third of our



to Support Our Nation's Farm Industry

nation's farmers are women, generating \$12.9 billion on the land they work." He told the audience that it is up to them, those agricultural leaders that work directly with farmers, to encourage and empower the next generation of women to continue this great work.

Conference topics also included urban agriculture, food deserts and food security, risk management, organic production, and marketing challenges.

Dr. Gregory Parham, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, gave Wednesday's keynote address. Dr. Basil Gooden, Virginia's Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry; Dr. Makola Abdullah, VSU president; and David Trimmer, Virginia Beach agriculture director, were among several others who offered insights on the value of agriculture locally, nationally and worldwide.

Reaffirming the Value of Small Farms for Healthy Lives and Economic Benefit

The conference is especially important because the number of small farmers and ranchers has declined for decades, while the number of very large farms has seen rapid growth. This decline is of concern because small farmers are usually more efficient, producing more food per acre than larger commercial operations. They support the sustainability of rural and farm economies, as well as protect and enhance natural resources. Small farmers are also seen by industry leaders as critical players in finding a solution to how our planet must more than double its food production in the next 34 years to feed a population estimated at 9.5 billion by 2050.

Learn more about the conference and see additional photos at www.vsu.edu/national-smallfarmconference.



Small Farm Outreach Program Names Award Winners at Fall Symposium

Charlie Maloney is 2016 "Small Farmer of the Year"

Charlie Maloney from King and Queen County received the Andy Hankins' Small Farmer of the Year Award during Virginia State University's Small Farm Outreach Program (SFOP) annual symposium held in November in Danville.

"I am honored and excited to receive this award, especially since I worked directly with (the late) Andy Hankins years ago," Maloney said. "I proudly accept this award on behalf of all small Virginia farmers."

SFOP agent Patrick Johnson, who works with Maloney and other small farmers in King and Queen, said he nominated Maloney for this distinction because he's truly deserving. "Charlie is the epitome of a successful small farmer who's innovative, eager to learn and willing to share his knowledge with others," said Johnson.

The youngest of six siblings raised on a small diversified farm on Maryland's Eastern Shore, Maloney recalls noticing as a youngster that small farms were



Charlie Maloney and his wife Miriam.



See a video of Maloney and his work at Dayspring Farm on Virginia Farm Bureau's YouTube channel.

being displaced by larger operations. This made it extremely difficult for small-scale producers to adequately provide for their families, he conceded. "Today, I'm thrilled to witness and be part of a resurgence, a regeneration of the small-scale farm operation," Maloney said.

A minister and licensed professional counselor, Maloney retired from his psychotherapy practice in 2001, opting to pursue farming full time. He and his wife Miriam use ecological growing methods on their 18-acre farm to produce a variety of fruits and vegetables as the mainstay of their agricultural enterprise called Dayspring Farm. They have marketed their produce through a 175-member CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) for the last 26 years and also sell to several restaurants and produce stores.

Notwithstanding his full-time farming obligations, Maloney has devoted time to teach a sustainability and agriculture course each spring for the past 12 years at the College of William and Mary.

Volunteer Says Farming Builds Self-Reliance

Chesterfield County resident Barbara Booker has been dubbed 2016 Volunteer of the Year by Virginia State University's Small Farm Outreach Program (SFOP).

Nominated for this award by Susan Cheek, SFOP agent and volunteer coordinator, Booker has volunteered the past two years on VSU's 416-acre Randolph Farm demonstration/research facility. Booker asserts that Randolph Farm is a valuable community resource where volunteers can learn about food as a basic need and about farming, which she considers a "self-reliant" skill that should be passed down to today's youth.

Cheek said Booker's dedication, determination and eagerness to learn make her a "wonderful asset" to Randolph Farm operations. She said Booker is one of several farm volunteers who give



Agent Susan Cheek with volunteer Barbara Booker

of their time twice weekly planting, irrigating harvesting and testing soil on SFOP demonstration plots. In 2016, volunteers also helped deliver more than 6,000 pounds of residual produce to local

charities and food banks.

"Gardening relaxes me," says Booker, a retired environmental/occupational health and safety professional who grows a smorgasbord of vegetables and herbs in her home garden.

Cheek said new farmers as well as persons interested in becoming farmers are encouraged to volunteer first to get helpful hands-on experience. She noted that several former SFOP volunteers have subsequently pursued their own farming ventures. And it appears Booker, who said she's "re-imagining" herself, will soon be following suit. She's planning to start a vegetable project, a market garden or small farm containing multiple crops.

Anyone interested in becoming a SFOP volunteer should contact Cheek at (804) 720-5539 or email scheek@vsu.edu.



Horticulture Specialist Helps Asian Ginger Farmers Increase Profits

Dr. Resa Rafie, VSU Extension Specialist in horticulture, offers this account of his travels to Myanmar as a guest of WinRock International, a nonprofit organization that works with people in the United States and around the world to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources.

I was invited to travel to Myanmar to evaluate their ginger industry and assist farmers in improving their ginger production and post-harvest quality for export. This was an incredible journey.

Local Ginger Consumption and Regional Trade

Myanmar, also known as Burma, is bordered by Bangladesh, India, China, Laos and Thailand. The country has a population of 51 million and more than 100 ethnic groups.

It is a country rich in jade and gems, oil, natural gas and other mineral resources, but farming and agriculture-related jobs are the most important sources of employment, accounting for 60 percent of the country's gross domestic profit. Rice is the country's most important crop. Spices such as ginger, turmeric, and red chili are also very important for local consumption and regional trades.

Myanmar produces about 17,000 acres of ginger, 7,000 acres of which is grown in the Shan State. Nearly 70,000 tons of the root is harvested yearly, with about 30,000 tons consumed locally. The majority of the surplus is exported either dried or fresh. About 60 percent of the ginger production is processed (sliced by artisanal small engine machines) and sun-dried, packed and exported to neighboring countries. India and Bangladesh are the largest buyers of Myanmar dried ginger.

India, China and other neighboring countries buy ginger from Myanmar at a price that is about \$300-\$400 per ton lower than international prices. It is speculated that these countries then re-export Myanmar ginger to international markets at higher prices. Consequently, local farmers are unable to make a profit. In fact, the biggest challenge facing



Dr. Resa Rafi (center) discusses ginger growing with farmers in Myanmar.

Myanmar ginger farmers is a lack of fair market price. Grown by mostly small farmers, ginger is taken to places called "Ginger Trading Centers." These trading centers determine prices, which are mostly based on speculation and not on true supply and demand.

Exploring Ginger Export Markets

During my three-week trip we drove over 930 miles, visiting 11 villages in seven townships. At each stop, we met farmers in the village's pagoda (the center of worship) or in the village leader's home. One thing that stood out was how dedicated people of the Myanmar are to their faith which is Buddhism. In every home there is a place for worship. When farmers, both men and women, came in to join our meetings, they first visited, prayed and paid respect in front of statues of Buddha before joining the meeting.

We met with groups of 15 to 25 farmers in each village where we discussed ginger production and

marketing challenges. We then went into the fields where they demonstrated their growing techniques. Ginger has been grown in Myanmar for thousands of years, and I wanted to learn about their practices for sustainable ginger production. I then demonstrated how we grow it the U.S., which was followed by much discussion and questions about all aspects of ginger production, including post-harvest handling.

In all, 150 farmers attended our meetings. I also attended and spoke via a translator with a ginger and turmeric industry group about the potential of Myanmar ginger and turmeric for export. Additionally, at a ginger grower meeting and field visit by the USAID Mission in Myanmar, we discussed ways to improve ginger farming in the country. This resulted in a continuing test market of Myanmar's ginger in the U.S. If it meets U.S. quality standards, there is a plan to start exporting ginger from Myanmar

—continued

Horticulture Specialist Travels to Myanmar, *continued from page 7*



Pictured above, employees select and sort ginger and turmeric at a processing plant supported by WinRock International in Myanmar.

to the U.S. in 2018. Based on my experience, I am very optimistic about this outcome. This can positively impact prices for local farmers.

A Personal and Professional Journey

I was offered this opportunity when, two years ago, Dr. Franklin Jackson, associate dean of Cooperative Extension at VSU, called a meeting between Extension Specialists and a team from WinRock International. The organization's team visited VSU to gain information and match intentional requests for expertise in different areas. I followed up after that meeting and two years later was able to travel to a region I've never been to before, learn about a new culture, experience great food, meet and work with wonderful people, and teach and learn from farmers about better ways to grow ginger. I am grateful that through Virginia Cooperative Extension I was given the opportunity to touch the lives of people and be touched by others who shared their valuable experiences.



Water Efficiency is Key for Armenian Delegation

As part of an eastern U.S. tour, a three-member Armenian delegation visited Virginia State University's aquaculture facilities last September to learn about best management practices used to help limited-resource fish farmers utilize water resources more efficiently.

Armenia is a nation and former Soviet republic located in Western Asia. Under the auspices of a grant from Partnerships for Enhanced Engagement in Research (PEER) and supported by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), project staffers are working with approximately 20 small fish producers growing trout and sturgeon in Armenia's Ararat Valley. Fish farmers there are using inefficient water technologies and experiencing a depletion of artesian water resources. Project objectives include developing an educational outreach program and fostering sustainable fisheries that use water resources more efficiently.

Dr. Brian Nerrie, Extension specialist with VSU's aquaculture program, directed the tour. He cited distinct similarities between VSU and Armenian aquatic programming efforts and considers fish farmers' concerns to be universal. Nerrie said VSU has worked with more than 300 fish farmers across the state who grow hybrid striped bass, catfish, trout, tilapia and freshwater shrimp.

"The Armenians realize they're wasting water and experiencing water quality issues, so they seek enlightenment on successful strategies we've implemented to address many of the same concerns," said Nerrie. "We not only shared our accomplishments with them, but demonstrated how they might apply some of the same strategies to address their current dilemma."

For more information on the Armenian visit or VSU's Aquaculture Program, contact Dr. Nerrie at (804) 524-5903 or email bnerrie@vsu.edu.

Family & Consumer Sciences Extension Specialists Help Communities Live Healthier



Debra S. Jones shares healthy tips with students at Virginia State University.

Debra S. Jones Leads Family Nutrition Programming

VSU's Family Nutrition Program, part of the Family and Consumer Sciences Extension program, has been connecting with community resources in the City of Petersburg and surrounding areas to improve residents' quality of life through nutrition. Recently, Extension Specialist Debra S. Jones joined forces with VSU's Family and Consumer Sciences Assistant Professor Crystal Wynn and two of her dietetics students to partner with the Southside Health Education Foundation to provide 28 middle and high school students and their parents with a Career Exploratory Development Program

Night. The program provided information and discussion on future educational and career opportunities in health and nutrition.

Meanwhile, Jones has been facilitating programs to address Type 2 diabetes. She has been collaborating with fellow Extension Specialists Dr. Leonard Githinji, Joel Koci and Wanda Johnson to provide Master Gardener and nutrition programs with HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital of Petersburg.

Rose Allen Promotes Good Nutrition Throughout Local Community

Rose Allen, program assistant with VSU's Cooperative Extension Family Nutrition Program, has provided nutrition education to local families and students, including at Petersburg Seventh Day of Adventist Church's food pantry. Along with her colleagues from the Petersburg Cooperative Extension Office, the Health Educator at Petersburg Public Library, and the Public Health Educator with the Virginia Department of Health in Petersburg, Allen executed a program called "Walk the Line."

"Walk the Line" is a proactive approach to assist families in need by providing short but informational lessons as they wait to receive supplemental food

items at a local food pantry. Allen also started a nutrition class with participants who were interested in learning more about meeting the nutritional needs of their family.

Allen has made several visits to local elementary schools to work with youth and recently started an adult nutrition class with the Parent Action Council at Walnut Hill Elementary School. In addition, she looks forward to providing support to Hopewell Healthy Eating And Living Alliance (HEAL), Hopewell Public Housing, and Woodlawn Learning Center Head Start Program.



Rose Allen talks about good nutrition with students at a local elementary school.

University Acknowledged For Continued "Green" Efforts

For the third consecutive year, VSU has been designated as a Tree Campus USA. The Arbor Day Foundation recognized the university for its continued green planting and green spaces, focus on sustainable planting techniques, and water conservation installations. The national recognition is bestowed on campuses that meet criteria set by the Tree Campus USA committee.

VSU was first certified in 2015 for its dedication to campus forestry management and environmental stewardship. The initiative was led by associate Extension agent Joel Koci, who formed the committee in collaboration with VSU faculty, facilities, police and public safety, and community groups.

In celebration of its Tree Campus USA recertification, a day-long series of events took place, recognizing the university's sustainability efforts on campus. Basil I. Gooden, Virginia's Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, presented President Makola M. Abdullah with a plaque at Foster Hall during a recertification ceremony. In addition, experts from the Timmons Group discussed water quality and lead a demonstration on small stormwater bioretention filtration systems called filterras and how they are maintained.



Urban Agriculture UPDATE

Harding Street Urban Agriculture Center Connects with Ag

The Harding Street Urban Agriculture Center (UAC), a unique research initiative funded by USDA NIFA, addresses urban agriculture using hydroponics and aquaponics. It is one of the few projects in the country that addresses food deserts and the intersection of food, energy, and water by incorporating indoor agriculture with solar energy and water reuse.

Throughout the year, Harding Street UAC has brought together professionals, public officials, agriculture leaders, school-age students and community members to foster discussion and education related to urban agriculture and UAC's mission.

This spring, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) College and Underserved Communities Partnership Program, along with staff from its Chesapeake Bay office, visited UAC to learn about the center and the Petersburg community. They toured the UAC, VSU campus and the city of Petersburg. They



(l. to r.) Darius Swinton, EPA; Pamela Bingham and Dr. Marcus Comer with UAC; Hana Hyland, EPA Region III CUPP Coordinator; and Reggie Parrish, EPA.

met with community leaders, VSU administrators and city officials. They also discussed environmental careers with VSU students and youth participating in Petersburg Parks & Leisure Services - Let's Move After School Program.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

(left) Dr. Ahkinyala Cobb-Abdullah, Virginia Union University professor and wife of VSU's president, with UAC's Dr. Marcus Comer. Dr. Abdullah brought students from her Plant Science course to UAC for a field experience in plant propagation.



ERIC RATCHFORD, SNAP DIRECTOR, USDA FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES TOURS UAC (l. to r.) Dr. Charlie Nealis; Pamela Bingham, UAC Project Director; Eric Ratchford, Dr. Marcus Comer; VSU College of Agriculture Dean Ray McKinnie, and Katrina Johnson, USDAs 1890's liaison.



EDUCATOR TOUR Teachers from Carver College and Career Academy in Chester, Va., learn about indoor hydroponics and aquaponics during a tour of the Harding Street UAC.



"MARDI GRAS" FRESH FOOD LOAN FUND WORKSHOP AT CAMERON FOUNDATION James Wallace with Virginia Community Capital gave a presentation on the Fresh Food Loan Fund with UAC's Dr. Marcus Comer.

Partners, Community Leaders, Educators and Youth



YOUTH PROGRAMS Students from Petersburg Parks & Leisure Services - Let's Move After School Program display their George Washington Carver Black History Month project after an activity with Harding Street UAC staff.



EARTH DAY In April, Petersburg Parks students gathered in front of the mural created by Richmond artist Hamilton Glass at the UAC. During the visit, they learned about pollinators and created solar art.

Urban Farmers Certified by New Training Program



From rooftop gardens and aquaponics centers in converted warehouses to growing crops on abandoned properties, urban farms are popping up across the country. These urban agriculture practices not only offer healthy food access for low-income residents, but also provide a wide range of community benefits, including closer neighborhood ties, reduced crime, education and job training opportunities.

But support and training for the growing number of urban farmers hasn't kept up with demand. Extension Specialist Dr. Leonard Githinji explains that many non-profits, churches, businesses and municipalities are putting great effort into getting urban farms up and running. One helpful resource is USDA's Urban Agriculture Toolkit that provides information to these group leaders, many of whom have never farmed before.

There's still a lot to learn, Githinji says, from business planning, legal issues and market development to soil quality,

pest management and plant health. To help meet the demand for academically trained urban agriculture professionals, VSU's College of Agriculture developed an Urban Agriculture Certificate program and trained its first group of 30 urban farmers this past spring. The 10-week program will be offered again in the fall.

Designed for anyone charged with starting or managing an urban farm or who wants to increase their marketability, the course provides a curriculum rich in the science-based knowledge needed to successfully and safely grow produce in an urban environment. Courses include: plant propagation and nursery management; plant disease and pest management; sustainable soil management; greenhouse production (hydroponic and aquaponic); animal husbandry (chickens and rabbits), and more. All courses are being taught by members of VSU and Virginia Tech faculty.

For more information on Urban and Sustainable Agriculture programs from VSU College of Agriculture and Cooperative Extension, contact Dr. Githinji at (804) 524-5482 or lgithinji@vsu.edu.



Guatemalan Farmers Benefit from Research Collaboration with VSU

In 2016 Extension Specialist Reza Rafie along with agriculture researchers Harbans Bhardwaj and Michelle Corley visited several pigeonpea fields in Guatemala planted by local farmers using varieties developed by Dr. Bhardwaj at VSU's Agricultural Research Station. There is much optimism among the Guatemalan Ministry of Agriculture about the future impact of the VSU pigeonpea varieties to provide much-needed nutritional alternatives to these communities. Also the economic potential of these varieties for commercial production and export are under discussion.

As the project's animal geneticist, Dr. Corley joined the team to encourage local farmers to use the leaf and stalk remains of the crop, commonly called stover, for feeding their livestock. The nutrient-dense field remains are an economical source of animal feed that can help sustain Guatemala's farming industry and help reduce world hunger.



(l. to r.) Dr. Rafie and Dr. Bhardwaj discuss pigeonpeas with farmers in Guatemala.

According to Dr. Rafie, positive results have already taken place using the VSU pigeonpea varieties. "We visited an indigenous community in the Peten region who are incorporating these beans in their diet to great success," he said.

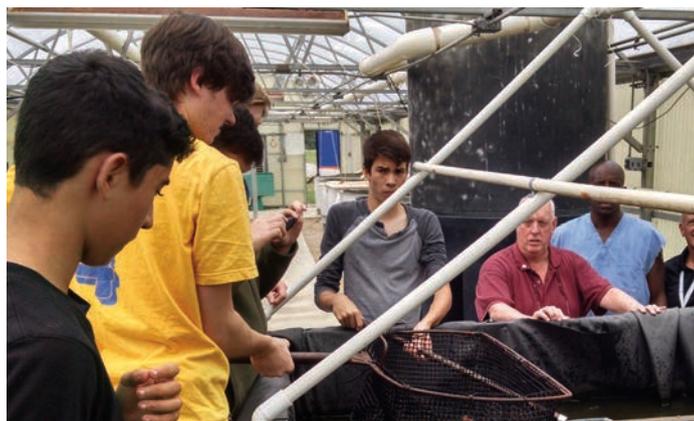
High School Students Win EPA Award with VSU's Help

Support and guidance from VSU Extension Specialists, experienced growers, and teachers paid off for the students at George Mason High School this year. Their project, "Healthy and Sustainable Farming Practices in Urban School Districts," won the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Mid-Atlantic Region 2017 President's Environmental Youth Award.

Many Virginia high schools have an aquaculture or hydroponics program as part of their agriculture curriculum. Virginia Cooperative Extension at VSU often works with these schools to get programs off to a strong start, give advice, show new techniques, and solve problems when necessary.

George Mason High School in Falls Church is one such school. Starting in 2015, Extension Specialist Brian Nerrie provided the school with tilapia to be raised in their new 350-gallon tank and shared best management practices for successfully raising the tilapia during a visit to VSU's Randolph Farm. Subsequent discussions were held on brood stock management to build future tilapia hatchery success at the school. The students also received assistance at school from John Graham, a fish farmer from Bedford.

Meanwhile, Extension Specialist Chris Mullins began working with the school's science teachers to determine the best hydroponic system for raising varieties of greens. After much deliberation, the school installed a nutrient film system and LED lighting. The students built the system using techniques learned at VSU to successfully grow different types of lettuce and leafy greens.



Dr. Brian Nerrie (in red) with students from George Mason High School.

After a year, they were successfully harvesting enough greens to start a student business enterprise. The yield, which includes Boston, butter and red lettuce, is now sold to the Falls Church City Public Schools for use in school lunches.

The President's Environmental Youth Award recognizes outstanding environmental projects while promoting awareness of our nation's natural resources and encouraging positive community involvement. Since 1971, the President of the United States has joined with EPA to recognize young people for protecting our nation's air, water, land, and ecology. It is one of the most important ways EPA and the Administration demonstrate commitment to environmental stewardship efforts created and conducted by our nation's youth.

Growing Industrial Hemp in Virginia

VSU is one of the higher learning institutions authorized to conduct industrial hemp research in Virginia. This is due to the passage of the 2014 Farm Bill Section 7606 by the U.S. Congress and the subsequent enactment of the Industrial Hemp Law by Virginia General Assembly in 2015. VSU began conducting field research on industrial hemp in 2016.

Researchers are currently evaluating industrial hemp varieties for seed, seed oil, and biofuel production adaptable to Virginia's climate. Optimum planting dates and fertilizer needs for maximum industrial hemp seed and fiber yields are also being investigated. The field trials are significant in evaluating the potential growth of industrial hemp in different parts of the state.

Virginia farmers also need information on the current and potential markets of industrial hemp products

before they decide to grow the crop. Knowledge about processing facilities is also essential to determine the types of industrial hemp that should be grown. The decision to grow industrial hemp for its stalk, seed or both is influenced by the type and location of processing facilities.

What Is Industrial Hemp?

Industrial hemp is a versatile crop that can be processed into different products with multiple uses. Its stalk can be used to produce biofuel, auto parts, paper, upholstery, fiber for cloth and other textile items, building materials, industrial products and different types of papers. Industrial hemp seeds can be used to produce animal feed and human food or serve as sources of oil for lotion and cosmetic products.



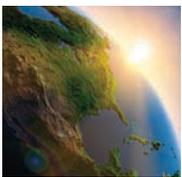
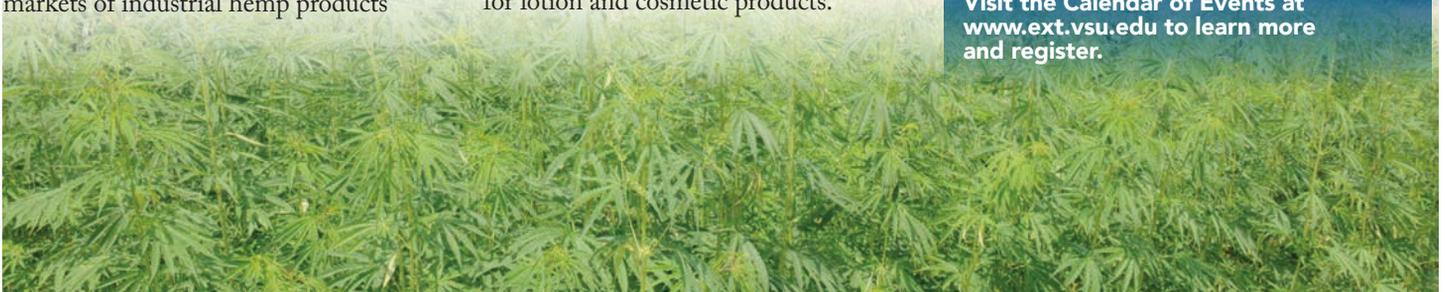
Industrial Hemp Field Day

AUGUST 17, 2017
8am - 12pm
VSU Randolph Farm

Guests are invited to remain until 3pm for informal discussion with presenters and exhibitors

This first-of-its kind public event will provide a forum for potential growers, researchers, marketing experts and industrial hemp product users to discuss the future of the crop in Virginia and neighboring states. Critical information will be shared on the challenges of growing industrial hemp, the available and potential markets for industrial hemp products, and crop processing feasibility to help farmers decide whether to consider growing the crop.

Visit the Calendar of Events at www.ext.vsu.edu to learn more and register.



Kenyan Delegation Visits Randolph Farm

A 30-member Kenyan delegation comprised of five county governors, financial officers, economic advisers and department heads recently visited Randolph Farm as part of their U.S. tour to explore potential collaborations with businesses and institutions and to exchange economic development ideas. The delegation toured the farm where they learned about various agricultural ventures underway including aquaponics, meat goats, sorghum, hops and high tunnels. They also expressed an interest in establishing educational partnerships and student exchange programs with VSU.

At right, delegates representing their country's Lake Region marveled over the hops project being conducted on a 1.4-acre plot on Randolph Farm. Dr. Wondi Mersie, Agriculture Research director, explained details of the project to the visitors.



Meet Ronald J. Howell, Jr., Special Assistant to Virginia's Secretary of Agriculture & Forestry

Ronald Howell, Jr. has joined the Office of the Secretariat for Agriculture and Forestry in Virginia, serving as a special assistant through a partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Office of the Governor. In this position, Howell works with Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Basil Gooden to provide leadership and expertise with the development and utilization of state-based economic development programs and tools, outreach initiatives, and other special projects in the agriculture and forestry sectors.

"I am extremely grateful to the secretariat for extending an invitation to work with the McAuliffe administration to serve Virginians, and I am ever-thankful to USDA for the opportunity to embrace my passion for assisting agricultural producers, rural and urban communities, and youth with understanding the industry," said Howell.

For the past six years, Howell worked at USDA in Washington, D.C. with the office of the Chief Financial Officer as a senior financial program and management analyst. He brings a wealth of knowledge on U.S. Farm Bill legislation; financial management; federal grants and program administration; direct and guaranteed lending practices; and contracting opportunities for small businesses, farmers and farmer-owned cooperatives. Howell will identify federal resources and help monitor state-based and federal program partnerships to ensure resources are appropriately leveraged and Virginia industry stakeholders and producers are receiving the greatest benefit from these programs.

Working collaboratively with state-based agencies such as the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Department of Forestry, Department of Housing and Community Development and the commonwealth's two land-grant institutions, VSU and Virginia Tech, Howell will enhance the services provided to socially disadvantaged farmers and rural and underserved communities to improve their stability and economic viability.

Howell wants to use his experience to further strengthen partnerships between state and federal agencies, focus on farm business development opportunities for agricultural producers, and promote community development for economically distressed communities. He also wants to increase statewide program advocacy and outreach efforts and encourage students to complete educational programs that specifically lead to agriculture-related careers.

In 2012 Howell earned his master's degree in agricultural education from Virginia Tech. He earned a bachelor's degree in agriculture business and economics from VSU in 2009, graduating with honors and as his class valedictorian. Currently



Ronald Howell, Jr.

"I am extremely grateful to the secretariat for extending an invitation to work with the McAuliffe administration to serve Virginians, and I am ever-thankful to USDA for the opportunity to embrace my passion for assisting agricultural producers, rural and urban communities, and youth with understanding the industry."

he is serving his second term as the at-large advocacy member on the Virginia Cooperative Extension Leadership Council and chairs the Surry County Career and Technical Education and Workforce Development Board.

Howell is definitely not a stranger to agriculture. He resides in Spring Grove, Va. where he is actively involved in the day-to-day management of his family's diversified farming operation in Surry County.

Students Take Home Top Awards at 1890 Research Directors Symposium

VSU student researchers took home top honors at the 18th Biennial Research Symposium, hosted by the Association of 1890 Research Directors (ARD) April 1-4 in Atlanta, Ga. This year's theme was "1890 Research: Meeting 21st Century Challenges Through Innovation." ARD is committed to the development of society-ready graduates who are in demand and uniquely trained to tackle issues impacting the nation and the world. VSU students exemplifying this commitment through their outstanding oral and poster presentations are:



Arrieyana Cartier

Physicochemical, Nutritional, Antioxidant, and Anticancer Properties of 14 Virginia-grown Sweet Potato Varieties

First Place: Undergraduate Oral Presentation in Food Safety, Nutrition and Health
Advisors: Dr. Yixiang Xu and Dr. Edward Sismour



Keia Jones

Characterization of Genomic Region of a Soybean Salt Tolerance Gene, GmST1, and its Putative Promoter Uncovers an Alternative Gene Arrangement

Second Place: Undergraduate Oral Presentation in Plant Health and Production and Plant Products. *Advisors:* Dr. Shuxin Ren and Dr. Jiang Guo-Liang



Oluwatomisin Oyewole

Removal of Nitrogen and Phosphorus from Wastewater as Dittmarite

First Place: Undergraduate Oral Presentation in Renewable Energy, Natural Resources, and Environment. *Advisors:* Dr. Asmare Atalay, and Mr. Brodie Whitehead



Nasreen Rehmani

Antioxidant and Antimicrobial Effectiveness of Starch Nanocomposite Films for Chicken Meat

Second Place: Undergraduate Poster Presentation in Food Safety, Nutrition and Health. *Advisors:* Dr. Yixiang Xu and Dr. Edward Sismour



Shrefa Hadadi

Extract from Green Papaya Inhibits Breast Cancer Cell Proliferation

Second Place: Graduate Poster in Food Safety, Nutrition and Health. *Advisors:* Dr. Rafat Siddiqui and Dr. Haiwen Li

Leader Selected for Hospitality Management Program

Berkita Bradford has been named chair of VSU's hospitality management department after serving as interim chair during 2016. As chair, Dr. Bradford will provide the department with administrative oversight and manage the day-to-day operations.

In accepting the position, Bradford said, "I'm both honored and humbled to serve the VSU family. I look forward to working with the wonderful faculty and staff in the department."

"Dr. Bradford's passion for the hospitality industry and wealth of experience in the field have positioned her to be an ideal fit to lead VSU's hospitality management department into the future," said Dr. M. Ray McKinnie, dean of VSU's College of Agriculture, which houses the department.

VSU's program is one of only five Historically Black College and University programs accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Programs in Hospitality Administration.



Berkita Bradford

Profiles: VSU College of Agriculture

The stories below were written by students in VSU's Mass Communication department as part of an internship with the College of Agriculture.

Teona Henderson

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

By Brittany Richardson '17

What can happen when you follow your dream—especially if you are young and established like Teona Henderson, a 2014 graduate of VSU? A former graduate of Petersburg High School and Richard Bland College of William and Mary, she currently teaches Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) at her high school alma mater where she oversees the Early Childhood Education program.



Growing up in Petersburg, Teona often passed by the VSU campus and dreamed of one day attending the university that sat on the hill. After high school, Teona worked as a nursing assistant before she decided to go back to school. Naturally, she applied to attend VSU.

Like many, when Teona first stepped onto VSU's campus as a student, she was unsure which major to pursue. As a young girl, Teona wanted to be a teacher, and the FCS department soon caught her attention. During college, she was able to complete an internship in her field, an experience that cemented her true love for what she does today.

Teona credits her experience and instructors for molding her into the teacher that she is today. From VSU faculty Dr. Badiyyah Waajid and Dr. Alice Joyner, she learned the importance of networking and joining professional organizations. Teona loved that the department was small and family-

oriented. She experienced the one-on-one attention that was given to every student in the department, and she thrived.

After receiving her bachelor's degree in family and consumer sciences with a concentration in family, child, and community services, Teona enrolled at Virginia Tech to pursue her master's degree in career and technical education. Last year Teona was named the Petersburg City Public School System's Career and Technical Educational Teacher of the Year.

"My advice to incoming and current students at VSU is to take the courses seriously, join the department student organization, be active and get to know your peers. Family and Consumer Sciences is a small but valuable department, and the knowledge I learned there will stay with me forever."

Stacey Bradshaw

AGRICULTURE

By Shanel Tyus '17

Stacey Bradshaw is specializing in plant and soil science in the agriculture department. Married with two children, Bradshaw moved to Virginia 22 years ago after receiving an associate degree in business management from Darton College in Georgia. In 2011 Bradshaw and her husband began a small vegetable production farm using environmentally friendly practices. They wanted to offer produce through a local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) outlet and to provide fresh food for their family.



Bradshaw had been working for one of the state's soil and water conservation districts. In 2014, her husband encouraged her to go back to college to pursue a degree in agriculture, and she jumped at the chance.

As a VSU student, Bradshaw was awarded a scholarship as part of the USDA 1890 National Scholars Program that pays agriculture students' full tuition and offers paid summer internships.

Bradshaw is confident that VSU was the perfect choice for her because of individualized time spent with professors, opportunities to participate in research programs, and the chance to work at VSU's Randolph Farm, which provides valuable hands-on experiences for students. After graduation, Bradshaw looks forward to working with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to help implement their mission of protecting soil quality and other natural resources.

Her advice to incoming freshmen: "Treat college like it's a job you love and you will succeed. Get to know your professors. Take advantage of the knowledge your professors have and put it to work for you as you navigate through college in preparation for becoming a strong, well rounded, knowledgeable member of the workforce."

Mackenzie Perry

HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

By Damali Jordan '17

Mackenzie Perry has set goals to become a chef at an Italian restaurant



Ag Alumni Gather for 35th Annual Banquet

or CEO of a restaurant franchise. A native of Beaufort, South Carolina, she now resides in Suffolk, Va. She recently gained experience in her field working as a food and beverage server at Walt Disney World Resort. Perry explains that with more than 300 food and beverage locations within their parks, dining is a huge part of the Disney business enterprise.

Perry's interest in cooking began at an early age, baking and cooking with her mom. Her passion to pursue a career in the industry grew throughout high school.

Perry chose VSU because it is an HBCU and has an accredited hospitality management program. She was excited about college but didn't know what to expect, and she assumed her classes would be difficult. Throughout the years her perception changed, and she discovered that college was not solely about academics, but how to balance books with a social life. She credits the hospitality management program for her opportunity to join the National Society of Minorities in Hospitality, which provides networking and conference opportunities.

She is also proud to have had the opportunity to study abroad in China. Perry feels this experience, "helped me gain a sense of independence and a global perspective of the industry." In addition, she has completed three internships while being a part of the hospitality management program.

Perry advises current and potential hospitality majors to gain as much experience as possible in the field they wish to pursue after graduation. She also thinks it is important for students to keep an open mind when looking for jobs in the field and to travel when possible to gain experience with different cultures.

Last fall, the 35th annual Agriculture Alumni Chapter Recognition Banquet was held at VSU's Gateway Dining and Event Center for about 100 alumni and guests who attended. Chapter president Dr. Clinton V. Turner and Dean M. Ray McKinnie greeted the attendees, followed by remarks from Zhane' Slade, president of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences. Keia Jones, agriculture student council representative, also spoke.

Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Basil Gooden offered a warm welcome, explaining that VSU has a special place in his heart. Gooden explained that both his mother and father are alumni and that in his role as Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, "Everyday when I go to work I know I'm standing on the shoulders of those who came before me like VSU alumnus Clint Turner and many others in this room."

At the banquet, three were honored with the 2016 VSU Agriculture Alumni Chapter award for distinguished service to agriculture: William Lewis, Jr., retired school administrator and current VSU adjunct professor in the department of agriculture; Dr. Wondi Mersie, VSU College of Agriculture associate dean and director of research; and Ronald Howell, Jr.

Howell, a 2009 VSU graduate, now works as a special assistant to Virginia's Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry. Previously he served in the Office of the Chief Financial Officer at USDA as a senior financial program officer, as well as the national program manager for local and regional food systems with the Agricultural Marketing Service in Washington D.C. In these capacities he was involved with the direct management and oversight of \$112 billion in economic spending.

Mersie has worked at VSU for 28 years in a number of leadership and research capacities and is responsible for bringing \$3 million in competitive grants to the university.

Lewis shared that his father won the same award about 33 years earlier. He remarked that throughout his life how very proud of his father he was and that he always tried to walk in his footsteps. "This award," he concluded, "confirms I'm getting a little closer."



(l. to r.) Ron Howell, Yvette Robinson, and Dr. Basil Gooden



(l. to r.) Award winners William Lewis Jr., Dr. Wondi Mersie, and Ronald Howell Jr.

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Try this recipe at home!



GINGER LEMONADE

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 cups sugar (or to taste)
- 16 cups water (4 quarts)
- 4 cups fresh lemon juice (24 lemons)
- 12 -14 slices fresh gingerroot
- 2 lemons, sliced

DIRECTIONS:

Mix sugar water and gingerroot in an 8 quart heavy pan. Heat to boiling, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat and cool 15 minutes. Remove gingerroot.

Pour sugar mixture into a pitcher or large glass or plastic container. Stir in lemon juice and refrigerate at least on hour until chilled. Serve over ice garnished with lemon slices.

Servings Per Recipe: 15 | Calories Per Serving: 175.3

Mark Your Calendar!

2017 SMALL FARM CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 10-11

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA

Featuring a Pre-Conference Session and Keynote by **Jean-Martin Fortier**, author of *The Market Gardener*.

Join Virginia small farmers and landowners to connect with professionals in agricultural practices and marketing. Learn about new opportunities and strategies that promote small farm profitability and sustainability.

REGISTRATION IS FREE.

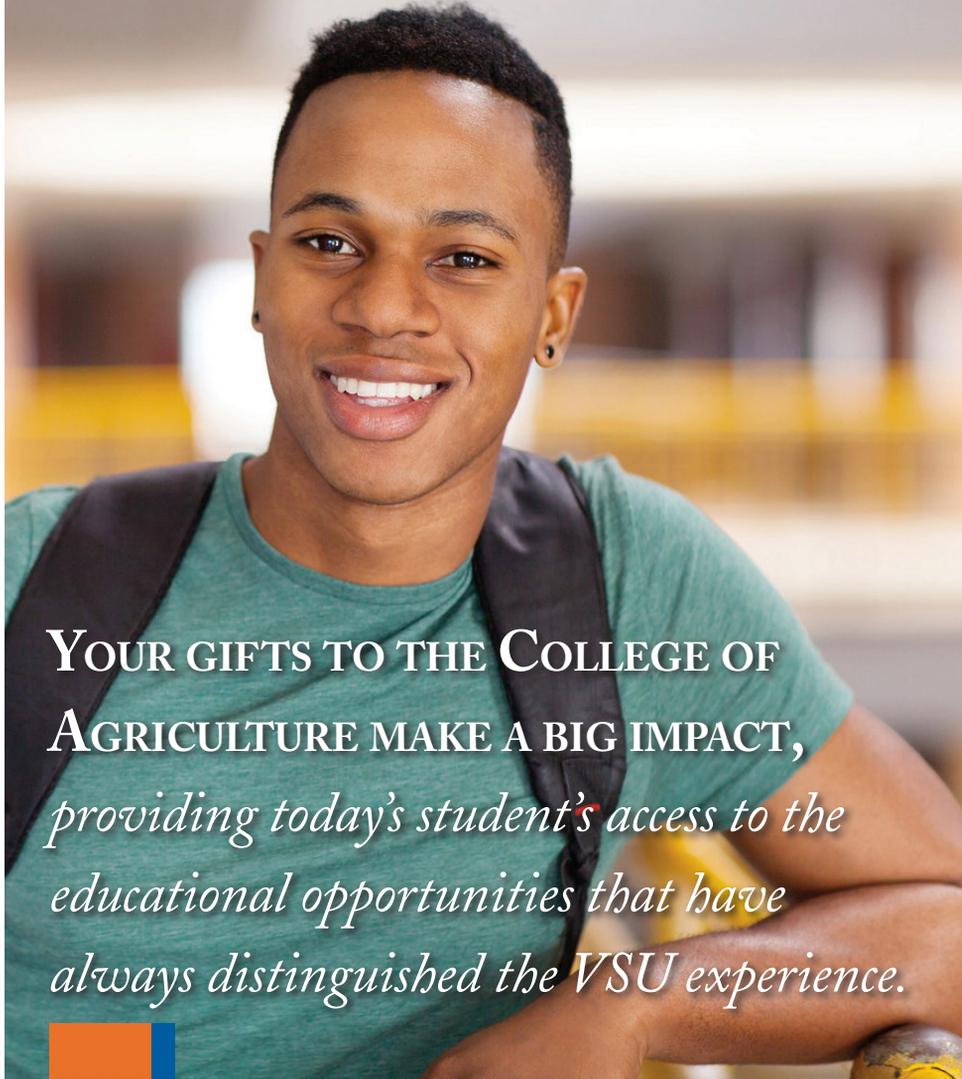


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Check out the Calendar of Events at **EXT.VSU.EDU** to get information and register for upcoming educational workshops and tours from Virginia Cooperative Extension at VSU. Join the conversation and follow news on our **Facebook** page (VSU College of Agriculture), **Twitter** and **Instagram** (@VSU_AG), and **YouTube**.

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YOUR GIFTS TO THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE MAKE A BIG IMPACT,
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The funds—one for each of the three academic departments in the College of Agriculture—help enhance our students' experience, from meeting their increased financial aid needs to professional development for faculty and investment in new academic programming.

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Follow the prompts for additional information and click "Donate Now."

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Nearly 500 visitors enjoyed demonstrations, exhibits and presentations at the 2017 USDA/VSU Randolph Farm Field Day in June.